

STUDENT FEE PROTEST

SUPPLEMENT

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MINISTER

Mr K.E. Beazley, M.P.,
Minister for Education,
King George's Terrace,
PARKES
ACT 2600

Dear Mr Beazley,

Delegates from this Union recently attended the twelfth Conference of Union Presidents and Executive Officers at the University of Western Australia, Perth. We were disappointed that neither yourself nor a representative from your Department were able to take advantage of this unique opportunity to discuss the Australian Government's role in tertiary education and, in particular, its funding, with representatives of almost every university and college of advanced education.

A central topic of discussion at the conference was the question of student body fees. As we understand the position, these will become the responsibility of individual students, except for those receiving a living allowance. A number of diverse opinions were expressed about this proposal and a detailed discussion ensued, later described by inter alia Professor R. Whelan, Vice-Chancellor of the University, as most useful. No doubt you have received the resolutions resulting from our debate. We should like to inform you of our wholehearted support for them and make some further comments on your proposal.

In accord with the conference resolution, we welcome the new funding proposals as being generally beneficial for our student members. As expressed by the conference, we also affirm that so-called "extra-curricular" activities are an integral part of the educative process within tertiary institutions. Among reasons for our belief, we point to comments to this effect by universities, their Vice-Chancellors, staff and administrators, to the implicit recognition of this in the Commonwealth payment of their fees through the various scholarship schemes, and to the significant national contribution made by former leaders of these organizations.

The principle of free education which the policy of fee abolition is designed to accomplish, must then include this part of tertiary education, as well as the more formal academic component. To separate the two, through the present proposals, is to fail to accomplish the Labour Party's stated aim; to introduce a false fragmentation in education and, indeed, to devalue the integral and valuable contribution student activities make to personal development.

Over and above this, the Union has further special features of importance. It provides certain services, which would otherwise be the responsibility of the institution to provide. The number of staff utilising the food services of Unions is considerable, even where separate staff clubs exist on campuses. Some unions



Mr Kim Beazley at the opening of the new ANU Union.

provide theatrical facilities used for academic purposes by Departments of Literature. Meetings of Faculty based and financed organizations and, indeed, of University committees, utilize union facilities.

A further feature shared with other student organizations is the autonomy and membership which, though limited in most cases, is essential to the concept of the Union. These characteristics are to be preserved, as the conference noted, by the maintenance of a fee structure, initially set by the individual Union and, depending upon procedures, varying from place to place, often confirmed by the Institution's governing

body. The principle of free education must therefore amount rather to a payment of or on behalf of the student rather than the direct funding acceptable for the University or college itself.

The arguments against such a proposal fall into two categories. In the first, are those which object to the payment per se. For example, it is argued that other areas of education must have higher priority when the funds are distributed. We believe that this argument should have forced the Government to abandon its policy of fee abolition, which gives to rich and poor alike, rather than means-tested assistance. The fact that the Government has chosen not to adopt

the latter strategy must imply that it considers the principle of free education to be more important than that of social justice in financial support.

Also in this category is the argument that student bodies, because they appear to be similar to Trade Unions or recreation clubs like the South Sydney Leagues Club, they should be treated as such. The Government does not pay the fees of their members; why should it pay students' fees to their Trade Union or recreation clubs? The fallacy in this argument is that the apparent similarity is neither real nor relevant. The Government and tertiary institutions has recognized this by demanding that membership be compulsory. It has long been recognized that activities within an educational institution are different from similar activities outside. In the past, the Government and other bodies have seen this clearly enough to include payment of these fees within the terms of their scholarship or other studentship benefits. We believe that this argument cannot really stand.

The second category of counter-arguments are those which suggest there are dangers to the Unions themselves in total Government funding. While believing that most of such arguments can be individually answered, or, at least that they refer to dangers less disadvantageous than the danger of the presently proposed scheme, we do not see that they are of concern to the Government. If the Unions wish to run these risks, that is their problem, and not the Government's. Thus we do not wish to raise the questions of fee rises with you. We should, however, comment on the corollary of the autonomy question, namely, that the Government will be held responsible for the activities of student organizations. This, of course, is presumably now true of tertiary institutions as a whole, though probably thought less undesirable, as these break the law or make public trouble rather less than student groups. However, we presume that the Government is not unwilling to allow legal activities, whether distasteful or not, and we suggest that the courts are the proper places for action against illegal activities, not the granting commissions. After all, the Government must accept responsibility for the activities of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, presently under the scrutiny of the A.C.T. Supreme Court. Yet that body has autonomy and is, allegedly, free from political interference.

We can see no educational justification for your current proposal, and believe these arguments outlined above must lead one to accept that in the present situation Commonwealth funding of Unions is appropriate. We hope you will understand our point of view and give this letter sympathetic consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Patrick Power,
Chairman, Union Board of Management.

WHY THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PAY UNION FEES.

1. Unions are an integral and totally legitimate part of tertiary education.
2. The ALP promised tertiary education without fees, not without tuition fees.
3. They recognize Unions as essential by insisting on compulsory membership.
4. They now pay for most Union functions on some existing campus somewhere.
5. Inevitably, institutions will refuse to collect fees and problems of sanctions will arise.
6. The cost would be less than \$3m p.a. — a drop in the education programme ocean.
7. Union fees in many overseas countries including Great Britain are paid by the government.
8. Autonomy of decision-making need not be infringed.

REFSHAUGE RAVES

The Labor Party, since coming to power on 2 December last has done many good things, and in 1974 will alleviate many of the financial problems that face tertiary students. It has, however, shown that power corrupts ideals, and has seemingly reversed many of the fine principles it supported while in Opposition.

In particular, the question of student fees has produced some strange results. For instance, the Government has involved itself in incredibly pedantic hairsplitting to show that "We will abolish fees" which really means "We will abolish some fees, but make the payment of others a pre-condition for attendance at University."

It has also meant a shifty sleight-of-hand in their basic rationalization for student funding. On the one hand, the Government pursues its policy of the abolition of tuition fees and associated charges, despite the fact that this gives money equally to the rich as well as the poor. But, suddenly, the argument changes and when the student fees are considered, that is a crime, and one can not possibly give to the rich as well as the poor.

And, it has also produced an interesting situation for the Students' Associations throughout the country. The University administrations, with which most SRC's have their main arguments (fees, exams etc) will now assume the importance of a benefactor. It will be upon their goodwill that the SRC funds will depend. Step out of line, many a Vice-Chancellor will say, and your funds will be cut off.

Of course, our "friends" in the Labor Party see this as an idle threat, but then they were not Students at La Trobe in 1971 or at Sydney in 1972! and, if Vice-Chancellors are unlikely to use this power, one wonders why the AV-CC (Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee) was so keen to support the Government's proposal and reject that of AUS! Can you honestly imagine them wanting to spend money (at ANU the Administration estimates it will cost \$45,000) just on collecting student fees. Even Vice-Chancellors do not have that much goodness of heart!

One wonders at the Government's view of Students' Associations that they are prepared to put their finances in so great a jeopardy. These are the organisations that have produced Wilenski, Spigelman, Bannon and a host of good Government resource personnel. SRC alignment with the Party has been close, though always independent. SRC policies have always been closer the Labor policies, than Liberal ones, which they have often condemned.

The commonest argument the Government members drag up is that they do not want the responsibility of SRC actions. In particular, they do not want to have to acknowledge spending (in any sense) public money on student newspapers. What is conveniently forgotten is that this has been done for years already - through the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme.

This scheme was of course supported by the Liberal Government - are the Liberals less unhappy about these political and other activities than the Laborites?

But that is an opportunist argument anyway. What of the principles? Murphy and his liberal censorship - they do not extend to student newspapers? Labor's famous open government - disclosures by student papers are not to be tolerated? Participation by groups most affected - tolerated?

students cannot have a say in the decisions that affect them if they are contrary to Government policy? Breaking of immoral laws - not by students? So, perhaps we can surmise that the Government is happy with its principles, so long as they remain words and not actions.

One may, perhaps, be too hasty in looking at the Government's motives in this way. Perhaps Government finance means Government control and who wants Government control. We can, however, point to Britain, where student fees are paid almost entirely by the government (through the Local Education Authorities) and may wryly note that this is little or no governmental control - even though a Tory party is in power. Indeed, when the Tories tried to get at student unions last year, they went down in a screaming heap in the fact of student pressure.

The funniest argument is that the level of radical campus activity will die down with this change in policy. Any even moderate radical could easily deny the truth of this; radical activity needs little finance. It is the submissions surveys, elections and newspapers that require it. The Government's proposal puts student travel, student loans, cheap housing in doubt, not abortion, anti-war or poverty campaigns.

We urge you to support the moves to protest the Government's heinous policy. Write to your member; write to Beazley. Sign the open letter now circulating the campus. This is not a campaign for a pension or security for old heavies, it is a fight to save your union, your Students' Association, the only body who are prepared to fight for a better deal for you, the student.

Richard Refshauge
President.

BLOOD DONORS PLEASE NOTE

In Bush Week, the Blood Bank will pay its annual visit to ANU.

Last year we agreed to recognize any donations made during the year and to credit them to the relevant Faculty total.

In order to do this we must see the Student Donor Card, so PLEASE will all intending student donors bring their Blood Donor Record Card to the Vampire Centre during Bush Week.

Helen Refshauge,
Hon. Director.

JULY 5

Students' Association

FORUM ON UNION FEES

Haydon-Allen Tank 1.00 pm

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WILLHELM REICH

Hear Peter Eedy speak on his ideas on Sex & Fascism, Orgasm & Neuroses the Sexual Revolution etc. on Monday July 9, at 12.30 pm in the Clubs & Societies Room.

DAY OF PROTEST

JULY 5th.

On July 5th ANU students will participate in a day of protest across Australia, against the Government's decision not to include Union, Sports Union and Students' Association fees within the new policy of fee abolition. The total cost of compulsory fees varies a great deal at the ANU dependant upon whether one is a first year or latter year student, and whether one is a full time or part time student.

In 1973 a new student faced an admission fee of \$8 and a University Union entrance of \$11 before he/she pays the traditional fees faced by all students. For full time students this year compulsory fees totalled \$47 and for part-time students \$37. At present these are either paid from the Students' pockets or are covered by the existing Commonwealth Scholarships Scheme or another scholarships scheme.

In 1974 tuition fees will be removed and paid by the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth will also offer means-tested living allowances to a yet unannounced percentage of students at yet unknown rates. The old scholarships scheme will be abandoned, except for those presently obtaining its benefits who may continue under it or opt to take their chances with the new scheme.

The Labor Government have demonstrated a greater concern than their predecessors to face the problems of student poverty and tackle the economic obstacles that clutter the educational pathway. The fact that the crazy link has been broken between academic results and one's entitlement to assistants grants is seen as a major breakthrough.

The real bone of contention in the whole new deal revolves around this question of SRC/Union and Sports Union fees. Relative to the whole scheme it may appear to be a minor aspect, but it's now looming as an issue of considerable concern to students. The AUS Executive took a strong view that it is an important enough matter to make some noise about; hence their move to co-ordinate a day of protest on July 5th.

The discontent seems to orbit around two points. Firstly, there's a note of betrayal in the air, 'The Commonwealth

will ensure the provision of tertiary education with fees,' reads the ALP 1971 Federal Conference record. 'We will abolish fees at Universities and CAE's' said Mr Whitlam at Bankstown on the opening night of his triumphant campaign in 1972.

The Government does intend to build into living allowances an adjustment which takes into account the fact that students have to pay these fees. Details of this special adjustment are not known and in any case, they will only benefit those students who qualify for the living allowance under the means test. This is likely to be 40%. More than half the student population will be without any assistance to pay these fees. Secondly, there is the feeling that by deciding to pay tuition fees and not Union fees, the Government has downgraded the position of the Unions and their long recognised place in tertiary education.

In a memorandum to all campuses on June 13th, the President of AUS, Neil McLean, informed student bodies that the Executive had resolved to set aside July 5th as a day of coordinated protest at the Government's decision not to pay Union fees. He said that the Executive had been told that a number of Unions may be willing to close, or substantially reduce their services on July 5th in protest of the Government's policy. The Executive decided to ask all the Unions to consider following a similar course of action, provided that they thought it was appropriate to their local situation.

At the ANU the Union Board decided to close the Union at a meeting on the 18th June.

It remains to be seen whether this flourish of concerted action will make any deep impression on the Government or on public officials, but there is enough movement on the campus to suggest that on July 5th, students will at least be telling the government what they think.

An important factor to consider is that the ALP Federal Conference is coming up on July 9th and strong stand of solidarity on July 5th may well influence a change in Government policy.

Martin Attridge.

NIGHTMARE Follies Presents —

"The Phantom Forest"

with * MIGHTY Kong
(ex members. Daddy Cool Spectrum + Co-Caine)

* Wally and the Wombats
* Gerry Attric + his ageing musicians

* Ellis D. Fogg Lights
* Silent Movies (Chaplin), Cartoons
* Free Supper

SATURDAY 14th JULY, 8.00 P.M.,
A.N.U. UNION REFECTORY.

AS
THE FIRST MEASURE
TO COMBAT RISING COSTS

The House Committee **strongly recommended**

to the Union Board

TO PUT A SURCHARGE ON THE PRICE OF
ALL MAIN MEALS SOLD IN THE REFECTORY

AS FROM 9TH JULY

MEMBERS WILL BE ASKED TO PRODUCE THEIR UNION CARDS WHEN PAYING IN THE REFECTORY

Applicable only to **non-members**

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY UNION
NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

All members of the A.N.U. Union who are not members of the incoming Board and not employed by the Union are invited to apply for the following positions on the listed Union Committees:

House Committee	:	3 positions
Bar Committee	:	1 position
Development Committee	:	5 positions
Discipline Committee	:	4 positions

Applications should be made in writing, supported by a mover and seconder from among the Union's membership and include a brief list of past experience. Applicants are also requested to appear before the incoming Board for interview — to take place on Monday, 6th August — 8 pm.

The tenure of office of committee members will be ONE YEAR from 7th August, 1973. Please note that Committee Meetings are usually held on Mondays.

E.C. de Totth,
Secretary to the Union.

**TO AVOID MAKING
MORE STUDENTS
PAY MORE**

THE UNION WILL BE CLOSED IN SUPPORT
OF A NATIONWIDE CALL BY THE A.U.S.


THURSDAY 5TH JULY 1973

**TO PROTEST
AGAINST
THE GOVERNMENT'S
DECISION NOT TO PAY ALL
STUDENT BODY FEES.**

WHOLE BUILDING CLOSED
NO SERVICES.